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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIRUT 01640

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SUBJECT: JA'JA'S "CHRISTIAN DECISION MOVEMENT"
AND RECONCILIATION EFFORTS

REF: BEIRUT 1635

11. (U) SUMMARY. A COMMITTEE CHAIRED BY THE MARONITE PARTIARCH CONTINUES ITS EFFORTS TO RECONCILE DIFFERENCES WHICH ERUPTED ON MARCH 13 WITHIN THE LEBANESE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY BETWEEN JA'JA'S "CHRISTIAN DECISION MOVEMENT" AND PHALANGISTS LOYAL TO THE PRESIDENT. THERE HAS BEEN NO SUBSTANTIAL PROGRESS SO FAR, BUT RECONCILIATION EFFORTS CONTINUE.

12. (U) THE SITUATION ON THE GROUND REMAINS LARGELY UNCHANGED, WITH JA'JA'S MILITIAMEN CONTROLLING MOST OF THE CHRISTIAN REGION FROM JUBAYL (BYBLOS) SOUTH TO THE DOG RIVER AND ALSO MUCH OF EAST BEIRUT ITSELF, INCLUDING ASHRAFIYAH. PHALANGE MILITIAMEN LOYAL TO THE PRESIDENT CONTROL ONLY THE METN, THE GEMAYEL FIEFDOM SITUATED BETWEEN THE AREAS HELD BY JA'JA'. ALL OF THESE AREAS REMAIN TENSE BUT CALM, EXCEPT FOR SOME ISOLATED CLASHES BETWEEN RIVAL LF GROUPS AT DAWRA (NEAR BEIRUT PORT) ON MORNING OF MARCH 15. END SUMMARY.

13. (U) THE SEVEN-MEMBER CHRISTIAN RECONCILIATION COMMITTEE, ESTABLISHED BY THE CHRISTIAN CONCLAVE CONVOKED URGENTLY BY GEMAYEL AT THE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE FOLLOWING JA'JA'S MARCH 13 UPRISING, MET FOR THE SECOND TIME IN BKERKE ON MARCH 14. AT THIS SECOND MEETING, THE RECONCILIATION COMMITTEE, WHICH IS CHAIRED BY MARONITE PARTIARCH KHURAYSH, WAS ABLE TO MEET WITH VARIOUS LF OFFICIALS, INCLUDING FOR THE FIRST TIME JA'JA' HIMSELF AND HIS MAIN SUPPORTERS. BESIDES THE PARTIARCH, THE RECONCILIATION COMMITTEE INCLUDES CHRISTIAN MP'S ELIAS HRAOUI, MICHEL MURR, KHATCHIG BABIKIAN, GEBRANE TOK, MIKEAL DAHER, AND KHALIL ABUHAMAD. AT THE MARCH 14 BKERKE MEETING, THEY MET WITH THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS OF THE LF COMMAND COUNCIL: SAMIR JA'JA', ELIE HOBEIKA, TONY BRIDI, CHARLES GHOSTIN, NAOUM FARAH, ELIE ASSWAD, SAMIR TAWILE, AND FAWZI MAHFUZ. LF COMMANDER FUAD ABU NADIR DID NOT ATTEND, BUT HIS PREDECESSOR, FADI FREM, DID.

14. (U) JUDGING FROM THE COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AFTER THE BKERKE MEETING, LITTLE PROGRESS WAS MADE DURING THIS FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH JA'JA'. "THE CHRISTIAN DECISION MOVEMENT," AS JA'JA'S GROUP NOW OFFICIALLY CALLS ITSELF, REAFFIRMED ITS POLITICAL NATURE, ITS DESIRE TO AVOID VIOLENCE, AND ITS AIM OF "REINFORCING THE INDEPENDENCE AND GLOBALITY OF CHRISTIAN DECISION ACCORDING TO DEMOCRATIC RULES." IN THE COMMUNIQUE, JA'JA'S MOVEMENT ALSO REAFFIRMED ITS RESPECT FOR EXISTING LAWS AND DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS. IT CLAIMED THAT IT WAS "PURELY AND UNIQUELY LEBANESE CHRISTIAN," I.E., NOT ISRAELI BACKED. FOLLOWING THE MEETING, HOBEIKA CALLED FOR THE REMOVAL OF ROADBLOCKS WHICH HAVE ISOLATED CERTAIN CHRISTIAN AREAS, MOST NOTABLY THE ROADBLOCK ESTABLISHED BY LOYALIST FORCES AT THE NORTHERN EXTREMITY OF THE METN IMMEDIATELY SOUTH OF THE DOG RIVER TUNNEL ON THE COASTAL HIGHWAY BETWEEN DUBAYYAH AND JUNNIYAH.

15. (U) FOLLOWING THE BKERKE MEETING, THE RECONCILIATION COMMITTEE REPORTEDLY TOLD PRESIDENT GEMAYEL THAT (A) JA'JA'S MOVEMENT WAS A MATTER WITHIN THE PHALANGE PARTY AND BETWEEN THAT PARTY AND THE LEBANESE FORCES AND (B) THAT JA'JA' HAD NO INTENTION OF LEADING A COUP D'ETAT. THE RECONCILIATION COMMITTEE THEN MET WITH THE PHALANGE PARTY POLITBURO.

16. (C) SIMULTANEOUSLY FOLLOWING THE BKERKE MEETING, JA'JA' AND HIS MAJOR SUPPORTERS MET AT THE HOME OF BASHIR GEMAYEL'S WIDOW, SOLANGE, AND FORMED AN "EMERGENCY COMMITTEE" COMPOSED OF ABU NADIR, JA'JA', HOBEIKA, FREM, BRIDI, GHOSTIN, KARIM PAKRADUNI, AND GEORGES ADWAN. SO FAR, THE PURPOSE OF THIS COMMITTEE HAS NOT BEEN ANNOUNCED BUT NAOUM FARAH (SEPTTEL) CONFIRMED THAT IT IS AN EMBRYONIC POLITBURO OR COMMAND COUNCIL FOR JA'JA'S "CHRISTIAN DECISION MOVEMENT."

17. (U) EARLIER ON MARCH 14, PRESIDENT GEMAYEL RECEIVED GENERAL MUHAMMAD KHOLI, AN EMISSARY SENT BY SYRIAN PRESIDENT ASSAD REPORTEDLY TO REAFFIRM SYRIAN SUPPORT. IT SEEMS HIGHLY UNLIKELY AT THIS POINT THAT SYRIAN VICE PRESIDENT KHADDAM WILL RETURN TO LEBANON ON MARCH 16 TO CONTINUE THE INTERCOMMUNAL POLITICAL TALKS UNdertaken LAST MARCH 9-10 AT BIKFAYYA.

18. (U) IN REACTION TO JA'JA'S CHALLENGE, DRUZE LEADER WALID JUMBLATT, SPEAKING FOR THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC FRONT, LENT SUPPORT TO THE PRESIDENCY AND VEHEMENTLY CRITICIZED JA'JA'S MOVEMENT AS "AN ISRAELI ATTEMPT TO TORPEDO THE POLITICAL ACCORD BEING DRAWN UP UNDER THE AUSPICES OF SYRIAN LEADERS." THE NDF REITERATED ITS SUPPORT FOR THE "SYRIAN OPTION."

19. (C) LATE NOTE: ACCORDING TO NAOUM FARAH (SEPTTEL), THE "CHRISTIAN DECISION MOVEMENT" DOES, IN FACT, SUPPORT THE REOPENING OF THE DOG RIVER TUNNEL AND SEVERAL BRIDGES BLOCKED BY PHALANGE MILITIAMEN FROM THE METN LOYAL TO GEMAYEL. AS OF EARLY AFTERNOON MARCH 15, THE LATTER HAD AGREED TO REMOVE THE BLOCKADES AND TURN THE CHOKE POINTS OVER TO THE LAF.

BARTHOLOMEW